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SUBJECT: PACIFIC ISLAND PERMREPS LAY OUT CONCERNS ON STATE  
OF U.S. PARTNERSHIP, CLIMATE CHANGE, DEVELOPMENT AID

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice for reason 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. In Ambassador Rice's March 5 hosted lunch for her counterparts from 11 UN member states representing Pacific island nations, the islanders expressed optimism for the new U.S. Administration after feeling drift in recent years. They called for enhanced partnership with the U.S. within the UN, and bilaterally in assistance and security programs. The Pacific ambassadors highlighted their effort to win UN adoption of a resolution bringing climate change to the UN Security Council, and urged a heads of state-level meeting with the U.S. within the next two years. Although the purpose of the meeting was to address partnership at the UN, the Pacific representatives focused substantially on bilateral and regional concerns. End summary.

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Current and Future Collaboration  
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12. (U) Ambassador Rice hosted a March 5 introductory lunch for the Permanent Representatives (or their substitutes) of eleven Pacific Island nations, who are some of the U.S.'s most reliable voting partners in the UN General Assembly. Attendees included:

-- Fiji Ambassador Berenado Vunibobo;  
-- Marshall Islands Ambassador Phillip Muller;  
-- Micronesia Ambassador Masao Nakayama;  
-- Nauru Ambassador Marlene Moses;  
-- Palau Ambassador Stuart Beck;  
-- Papua New Guinea Ambassador Robert Aisi;  
-- Samoa First Secretary Noelani Manoa;  
-- Solomon Islands Ambassador Collin Beck;  
-- Tonga Ambassador Fekitamoealoa 'Utoikamanu;  
-- Tuvalu Ambassador Afelee Pita; and  
-- Vanuatu Ambassador Donald Kalpokas.

13. (U) Ambassador Rice noted that their event was the first diplomatic lunch or dinner she had hosted since arriving at USUN, and briefly reviewed the priorities of the new Administration in the United Nations. She emphasized that U.S. focus on such key issues as climate change, development, UN peacekeeping and non-proliferation could not produce results without the continued support and partnership of our allies in the Pacific region. Tonga PermRep 'Utoikamanu, as chair of the Pacific group, underscored the Pacific states' commitment to friendship and partnership with the U.S., saying they were "heartened" by the new Administration's evident engagement at the UN, and turned the floor over to colleagues to raise agreed-upon discussion points.

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Sustainable Development, MDGs  
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14. (SBU) Solomon Islands PermRep Collin Beck raised the priority issue of development for the Pacific states, particularly as six of the states are officially designated as Least Developed Countries (LDC), and many of them remain off-target for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Beck noted that the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and USAID would be valuable tools to help achieve their development goals, but none of the states except Vanuatu qualify for MCC, and USAID has a greatly reduced presence. Top sectors for development assistance

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identified were education, health (HIV, malaria, diabetes), and renewable energy. Beck noted that, with one-third of budget outlays going to meet energy costs, finding sources of renewable energy would free resources to address health and education.

15. (SBU) Nauru PermRep Moses complimented a diabetes health program initiated with the help of Congressman Eni Faleomavaega, and urged the State Department and USAID to find funds to continue it. Marshall Islands PermRep Muller asked that USAID channel more programs through host governments rather than through NGOs, since the chosen NGOs do not always share the governments' priorities. He also lamented that USAID (or possibly FEMA) recently turned down a request for disaster assistance in the Marshall Islands because only about 300 families were rendered homeless, which did not meet assistance thresholds. He argued that small island states should be subject to different threshold criteria. Muller also pointed out that other states rendered aid, making the U.S. refusal look even worse.

16. (C) Papua New Guinea (PNG) PermRep Aisi complained that UN agencies constantly offer excuses for why they cannot have an aid presence in their countries, yet the UN constantly asks the Pacific troop-contributing states for help with each new peacekeeping mandate. He urged the U.S., as one of the main financial contributors to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to ensure that the Pacific region will get a fair share of those funds. He and Micronesia PermRep Nakayama expressed deep frustration with unmet promises from UN Secretaries-General to have a greater UN physical presence in their region, and with the UN even hiring unqualified temporary hires in the region to provide ineffectual assistance. Nauru PermRep Moses said the UN finally assigned a long-promised "expert," but only if donor funds were found to finance him. "We're right back where we started!" Ambassador Rice inquired whether the World Bank had a similar track record, with Tonga replying that the Asia Development Bank has a higher profile since not all Pacific states are World Bank members. Ambassador Moses expressed astonishment at the amounts of development assistance that donors have poured into "bottomless pits" in other regions of the world with little discernible effect, quipping in contrast that "Our pits have bottoms!"

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LDC Status  
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¶17. (SBU) Solomons PermRep Beck noted that three of the Pacific states were in the process of possible graduation from the Least Developed Country status, expressing concern that such graduation would deprive those states of key assistance precisely at a time of global financial crisis and continued worries about vulnerability to climate change. He argued that the UN's Commission on Development Policy (CDP), which determines the criteria for LDC graduation, is not properly taking these factors into consideration, and called for a temporary halt to any further graduation. Tuvalu PermRep Pita echoed the concerns, saying it was ridiculous that the CDP was simultaneously trying to graduate resource-poor Tuvalu from the LDC list while seeking to add resource-rich Papua New Guinea. PNG Ambassador Aisi likewise expressed frustration with the CDP, saying the body continued to offer LDC status to PNG despite PNG's firm opposition. (Note: Unlike graduation from LDC status, a state must

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consent to be added to that category of countries. End note.)

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Climate Change and Security  
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¶18. (SBU) Palau PermRep Stuart Beck briefed Ambassador Rice on the Pacific Islands' effort to win adoption of a General Assembly (GA) draft resolution calling on the UN Security Council to consider the security implications of climate change. Beck noted that 61 states have agreed to co-sponsor their resolution, but admitted that strong opposition remains from some oil-producing states and other developing countries, including Caribbean island states, either out of fear that the UNSC will force action to halt carbon emissions, or because they feel climate change is better addressed in a universal body like the General Assembly. He also attributed some opposition to anti-U.S. sentiments, both because of the pro-U.S. voting record of some Pacific states, and because of the U.S. influence within the UNSC.

¶19. (SBU) Beck said the Pacific states currently hope for GA action on the resolution by May, be that adoption by consensus or by vote. (Note: Beck has had to back off several of these artificial target dates already in this process. End note.) He solicited U.S. support and even co-sponsorship, though it remains difficult to predict what the key provisions of the text might be at the end of the drawn-out negotiations. Beck joked that some delegations are stringing out the negotiations "as if it were a jobs program." He was heartened, however, that the process has at least further raised sensitivity within the UN to the existential threat climate change poses to some Pacific nations.

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Regional Security, UN Peacekeeping  
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¶10. (SBU) Reacting to Ambassador Rice's mention of non-proliferation issues, PNG PermRep Aisi noted that most of the Pacific states are strong supporters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He highlighted that several of the Pacific states are contributing troops or police forces to conflict areas, including in partnership with the U.S. Within their region, the states also cooperate on transnational crime issues to a certain extent. He admitted that some of the Pacific states are delinquent in submitting required reports to the UNSC, but asked for USG understanding that the states have limited capacities for fulfilling reporting requirements, and that most of their attentions are focused on key development needs. He lamented at length that, while UN rhetoric puts

equal emphasis on development and security, the Pacific states are asked to provide too much of the latter and get in return too little of the former. Marshall Islands PermRep Muller singled out the Shiprider agreements with the U.S. Coast Guard as one of the best arrangements to enable Pacific states to police their exclusive economic zones, but urged that those efforts be augmented. Tuvalu PermRep Pita lamented that USG subsidies to finance monitoring of multilateral fishing treaties have declined.

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Access to Guam jobs, contracts  
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¶11. (SBU) Several of the ambassadors pointed out the repositioning of U.S. Marines to Guam as affording key employment opportunities for the neighboring states. Marshall Islands PermRep Muller said that the Freely Associated States have the advantage of proximity and immigration status to compete for jobs, but argued that the other states of the region should likewise be given opportunities. Tonga PermRep 'Utoikamanu noted that there were ongoing negotiations with the State Department on this issue.

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Better Consultations with the U.S.  
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¶12. (C) Nauru PermRep Moses raised the Pacific states' desire for a more regular and formalized annual or biennial meeting with the U.S. at either head of state or ministerial level. She noted that the Pacific heads of state came to Washington, DC, two years ago for a meeting of the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL), but said the lack of a "proper" reception by the President and Secretary of State left a bitter taste in the leaders' mouths. Likewise, when their foreign ministers have a bilateral with the U.S. on the margins of the September opening of the General Assembly, they never receive a reciprocal level of U.S. participation. Moses noted that Rep. Faleomavaega was trying to organize a PICL meeting for September 2010 in New York, and she urged that the Administration help make it a "proper, substantive event."

¶13. (C) Micronesia PermRep Nakayama also urged more regular consultations in New York between the U.S. and Pacific missions to the UN. He suggested the appointment of a dedicated officer within the U.S. Mission as their primary point of contact on any issue. Given their limited staffs, the Pacific states cannot follow in detail many of the issues that come up for decision in the General Assembly and would appreciate U.S. insights. Asked what level of service USUN was currently providing them, Marshall Islands PermRep Muller complained that he is often contacted during the fall only an hour before a vote on some matter of concern to the U.S. and simply told how he should vote, but not why. He said that such behavior made it difficult for him to justify or even explain to his capital what actions he has taken. Moreover, what consultations take place are often very brief and on short-notice, which does not allow either in-depth discussion nor time to address issues that he might wish to discuss.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Rice thanked the representatives for their concrete suggestions, and for raising important issues in a friendly and open manner. She promised that the USG would examine many of their recommendations, and that the meeting represented just the beginning of a dialogue and not the end. Wolff